



News from **Councilmember Todd Gloria**

City of San Diego ▪ District Three

Friends,

Today, the City Council approved plans to restore pedestrian-only access through the heart of Balboa Park.

There is no place that ignites the passions of San Diegans like Balboa Park, and the plans to remove cars from the park stirred controversy to new levels. I am grateful that our City is home to a place of such importance – historically, civically, and personally. The vote I cast to approve the Plaza de Panama project reflects my respect and appreciation for what is known as the jewel of our City.

I believe the benefits of the project, including removal of all cars from the heart of the park for greater pedestrian safety and access; reclaiming more than six acres of parkland for the exclusive use of the people; increasing the amount of parking in the Park; and reducing the number of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts and the potential for accidents outweigh its costs. Ultimately, the City Council selected the approach that best balances the needs of the various stakeholders and sets Balboa Park on the best path forward as it embarks on its next 100 years.

Since the project was originally proposed in August 2010, I have dedicated a considerable amount of time and thought to it, just as you should expect from your representative. Though I've long sought to remove cars from the Plaza de Panama and restore it as a public and pedestrian-friendly area in time for the Centennial of the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, I admit that I was not immediately a fan of the proposal developed by Dr. Irwin Jacobs when it was first presented almost two years ago.

After walking the Park, talking to you, reviewing hearings on the topic, considering the input of local groups, reading your emails and social media posts, my decision finally hung on one question: what is the best thing I can do for the Park and for current and future generations of San Diegans? I believe voting to support the project was the right answer to that question.

I recognize that my vote may come as a disappointment to some of you who oppose this project. While I don't expect you to agree with me, I hope you know that this decision was made after a thorough impartial review by my staff and me. It was made not because of any pressure by either side but because I believe it's the right choice. Despite disagreements, the park endures. Proponents and opponents of our action today all want the Park to be as good as it can be.

Balboa Park exists as it is today because of vision. A forward-thinking group of San Diegans decided to organize the 1915 Exposition. Some of their neighbors certainly found their plans controversial and questioned their ability to see their ambitious plans through. But our City, our region, and our world is better because of that forward thinking.

The Plaza de Panama project will enhance the beauty of the Park as we know it today, just as the museums and institutions built for the 1915 Exposition changed the beauty of the bare land that stood there previously. I believe future generations will thank us for our vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd".

Todd

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